

Abandoned By Disney

Some of you may have heard that the Disney corporation is responsible for at least one real, "live" Ghost Town.

Disney built the "Treasure Island" resort in Baker's Bay in the Bahamas. It didn't START as a ghost town! Disney's cruise ships would actually stop at the resort and leave tourists there to relax in luxury.

This is a FACT. Look it up.

Disney blew \$30,000,000 on the place... yes, Thirty Million Dollars.

Then they abandoned it.

Disney blamed the shallow waters (too shallow for their ships to safely operate) and there was even blame cast on the workers, saying that since they were from the Bahamas, they were too lazy to work a regular schedule.

That's where the factual nature of their story ends. It wasn't because of sand, and it obviously wasn't because "foreigners are lazy". Both are convenient excuses.

No, I sincerely doubt those reasons were legitimate. Why don't I buy the official story?

Because of Mowgli's Palace.

Near the beachside city of Emerald Isle in North Carolina, Disney began construction of "Mowgli's Palace" in the late 1990s. The concept was a Jungle-themed resort with a large, you guessed it, PALACE in the center of the whole thing.

If you're unfamiliar with the character of Mowgli, then you might better remember the story "The Jungle Book". If you haven't seen it anywhere else, you'd know it as the Disney cartoon from

decades past.

Mowgli is an abandoned child, in the jungle, essentially raised by animals and simultaneously threatened/pursued by other animals.

Mowgli's Palace was a controversial undertaking from the start. Disney bought up a ton of high-priced land for the project, and there was actually a scandal surrounding some of the purchases. The local Government claimed "eminent domain" on people's homes, then turned around and sold the properties to Disney. At one point a home that had just been constructed was immediately condemned with little to no explanation.

The land grabbed by the Government was supposedly for some fictional highway project. Knowing full well what was going on, people started calling it "Mickey Mouse Highway".

Then there was the concept art. A group of stuffed shirts from Disney Co. actually held a city meeting. They intended to sell everyone on how lucrative this project was going to be for everyone. When they showed the concept art, this gigantic Indian Palace... surrounded by JUNGLE... staffed with men and women in loincloths and tribal gear... well, suffice to say everyone flipped their shit.

We're talking about a large Indian Palace, Jungle, and Loincloths not only in the center of a relatively wealth area, but also a somewhat "xenophobic" area of the southern USA. It was a questionable mix at that point in history.

One member of the crowd tried to storm the stage, but he was quickly subdued by security after he managed to break one of the presentation boards over his knee.

Disney took that community and essentially broke it over its knee, as well. The houses were razed, the land was cleared, and there wasn't a damned thing anyone could do or say about it. Local TV and Newspapers were against the resort at the beginning, but some insane connection between Disney's media holdings and

the local venues came into play and their opinions turned on a dime.

So anyway, Treasure Island, the Bahamas. Disney sunk those millions in and then split. The same thing happened with Mowgli's Palace.

Construction was complete. Visitors actually stayed at the resort. The surrounding communities were flooded with traffic and the usual annoyances associated with an influx of lost and irate tourists.

Then it all just stopped.

Disney shut it down and nobody knew what the Hell to think. But they were pretty happy about it. Disney's loss was pretty hilarious and wonderful to a large group of folks who didn't want this in the first place.

I honestly didn't give the place another thought since hearing it closed over a decade ago. I live maybe four hours from Emerald Isle, so really I only heard the rumblings and didn't experience any of it first-hand.

Then I read this article from someone who had explored the Treasure Island resort and posted a whole blog about all the crazy shit he found there. Stuff just... left behind. Things smashed, defaced, probably ruined by the disgruntled former employees who had lost their jobs.

Hell, the locals from all around probably had a hand in wrecking that place. People there felt just as angry about Treasure Island as folks here did about Mowgli's Palace.

Plus there were rumors that Disney had released their aquarium "stock" into the local waters when they closed... including sharks.

Who wouldn't want to take a few swings at some merchandise after that?

Well, what I'm getting at is that this blog about Treasure Island got me thinking. Even though many years had passed since its closing, I figured it might be cool to do some "Urban Exploration" at Mowgli's Palace. Take some photos, write about my experience, and probably see if there was anything I could take home as a memento.

I'm not going to say I wasted no time in getting there, because honestly it took me another year after I first found that Treasure Island article to get around to going up to Emerald Isle.

Over the course of that year, I did a lot of research on the Palace resort... or rather, I tried to.

Naturally, no official Disney site or resource made any mention of the place. That had been scrubbed clean.

Even odder, however, was that nobody before myself had apparently thought to blog about the place or even post a photo. None of the local TV or Newspaper sites had one word about the place, though that was to be expected since they had all swung Disney's way. They wouldn't be out there lauding their embarrassment, you know?

Recently, I learned that corporations can actually ask Google, for example, to remove links from search results... basically for no good reason. Looking back, it's probably not that nobody spoke of the resort, but rather their words were made inaccessible.

So in the end I could barely find the place. All I had to go on was an old-as-hell map I'd received in the mail back in the 90s. It was a promotional item sent out to people who had recently been to Disney world, and I guess since I had been there in the late 80s, that was "recent".

I didn't really intend to hang onto it. It just got shoved in with my books and comics from my childhood. I'd only remembered it months into my research, and even then it took me another few

weeks to locate the storage bin my parents had shoved it all into.

But I DID find it. Locals were no help, as most were transplants who had moved to the beach in recent years... or old residents who just sneered at me and made rude gestures the second I managed to say "Where would I find Mowgli's---"

The drive took me through an inordinately long corridor of overgrowth. Tropical plants that had run rampant and overpopulated the area mixed with the native species of flora that actually BELONGED there and had tried to reclaim the land.

I was in awe when I reached the front gates of the resort. Tremendous, monolithic wooden gates whose supports to either side looked like they must've been cut from giant sequoias. The gate itself had been gouged in several places by woodpeckers and eaten away at the base by burrowing insects.

Hanging on the gate was a sheet of metal, some random scrap, with hand-painted letters scrawled in black. "ABANDONED BY DISNEY". Clearly the handiwork of some past local or an employee who wanted to make some small protest.

The gates were open enough to walk through, but not drive, so grabbing my digital camera and the map, whose flip-side showed a layout of the resort, I set off on foot.

The inner grounds of the place were just as overgrown as the entryway. Palm tree stood untended and ragged among piles of their own coconuts. Banana plants similarly stood in their own stinking, bug-riddled refuse. There was this sort of clash between order and chaos, as carefully planted rows of perennial flowers mixed with obnoxious tall weeds and stinking, blackened mushrooms.

All that remained of any outdoor structures were broken, rotting wood and various charred bits of unidentifiable material. What was most likely an information booth or an outdoor bar was now simply a pile of assorted debris chopped up by past vandalism

and ravaged by weather.

The most interesting thing on the grounds was a statue of Baloo, the friendly bear from the Jungle Book, which stood in a sort of courtyard in front of the main building. He was frozen in a jovial wave toward no one, staring into empty space with a silly, toothy grin as bird shit covered whole swaths of his "fur" and vines ensnared his platform.

I approached the main building - the PALACE - only to find the outside of the building covered in graffiti where the original paint hadn't peeled and chipped away. The front doors weren't just open, they had been taken off their hinges and were stolen.

Above the front doors, or the gaping maw where they had been, someone had once again painted "ABANDONED BY DISNEY".

I wish I could tell you about all the awesome stuff I saw inside the Palace. Forgotten statues, abandoned cash registers, a full-fledged secret society of homeless bums... but no.

The inside of the building was so stark, so bare, that I actually think people had stolen the molding off the walls. Anything that was too big to steal... counters, desks, giant fake trees... they were all resting amid this empty echo chamber that amplified my every step like a slow rat-a-tat of a machine gun.

I checked the floorplan and headed to all the locations that might seem in any way interesting.

The kitchen was as you'd imagine... an industrial food prep area with all the appliances and space, no expenses spared. Every glass surface was broken, every door knocked off its hinges, every metal surface kicked and dented. The entire place smelled like very old piss.

The huge freezer, not even remotely cool now, had row upon row of empty shelf space. Hooks hung from the ceiling, probably for hanging cuts of meat, and as I stood inside for a moment, I

noticed they were swinging.

Each hook swung in a random direction, but their movements were so slow and small that it was almost impossible to see. I figured it had been caused by my footsteps, so I stopped one from swinging by clutching it in my fist, then carefully letting go, but within seconds it started to swing once more.

The bathrooms were in much the same state as the rest of the place. Just like the Treasure Island resort, someone had methodically smashed each porcelain commode with coconuts and other implements. There was about a half inch of rancid, stinking stagnant water on the floor, so I didn't stay there very long.

What's odd is that the toilets and the sinks (and the bidets in the ladies' room, yes I went there) all dripped, leaked, or just ran freely. It seemed to me that they should've shut the water off long, LONG ago.

There were plenty of rooms in the resort, but naturally I didn't have time to look through them all. The few I did peer into were similarly wrecked, and I didn't expect to find anything there. I thought there was actually a television or radio in one room, as I really think I heard a quiet conversation coming out.

Though it was like a whisper, probably my own breathing echoing in the silence, or just another case of the sound of flowing water playing tricks on the mind, this is what it sounded like...

1: "I didn't believe it."

2: (short, unknown reply)

1: "I didn't know that. I didn't know that."

2: "Your father told you."

1: (unknown reply, or possibly just weeping.)

I know, I know, that sounds ridiculous. I'm just telling you what I experienced, why I thought there might've been something running in that room - or worse, some vagrants who had holed up there and probably would've knifed me.

At the front doors of the Palace again, I figured I hadn't found anything of note and had wasted the trip up.

As I looked out the door, I noticed something interesting in the courtyard that I had apparently missed. Something that would give me at least ONE thing to show for all my trouble, even if it was just a photograph.

There as a lifelike statue of a python, maybe eighty feet long, coiled up and "sunning" itself on a pedestal right in the center of the area. It was almost time for the sun to start setting, so the light fell onto the object in the PERFECT way for a photograph.

I approached the python and snapped a photo. Then I stood on my toes and snapped another. I moved closer again to get the detail of its face.

Slowly, casually, the python lifted its head, looked directly into my eyes, turned, and slithered off the pedestal, across the grass, and into the trees.

All eighty feet of it. Its head long disappeared into the woods before its tail even left the sunning spot.

Disney had released all their exotic animals onto the grounds. Right there on my floorplan map was the "Reptile House". I should have known. I'd read about the sharks at Treasure Isle, and I should have KNOWN they'd done this.

I was dumbfounded, just utterly stupefied. My mouth must've been hanging open for the longest time before I came back down

to Earth and snapped it shut. I blinked a few times and backed away from where the snake had been, back toward the Palace.

Even though it was totally gone, I still wasn't taking any chances and backed my way into the building.

It took a few deep breaths and slaps to my own face to get myself right in the head again after that.

I looked for a place to sit down, as my legs were feeling a bit like jelly at this point. Of course, there WAS no place to sit down unless I wanted to recline in the broken glass and dead leaf carpet or haul myself up onto a desk of questionably reliability.

I had seen some stairs near the Palace's lobby and decided to go have a seat there until I felt better.

The staircase was far enough away from the front of the building to be relatively clean, save for a startling accumulation of dust. I pulled a wedge of metal off the wall, once again painted with the "ABANDONED BY DISNEY" motto I'd become accustomed to. I placed the wedge on the stairs and sat on it to keep at least somewhat clean.

The stairway led downward, below ground level. Using my camera flash as a sort of improvised flashlight, I could see that the staircase ended in a metal mesh door with a padlock. A sign on the door... a REAL sign... read "MASCOTS ONLY! THANK YOU!".

This perked up my spirits a little bit, for two reasons. One, a Mascots-Only area would have definitely had some interesting stuff back in the day... Two, the padlock was still in place. Nobody had gone down there. Not the vandals, not the looters, nobody.

This was the one place I could actually "explore" and perhaps find something interesting to photograph or wantonly steal. I had come to the Palace essentially agreeing with myself that it was okay to take anything I wanted because - hey - "abandoned".

It didn't take much to bust the lock. Well, actually that's wrong. It didn't take much to bust the metal plate on the wall that the padlock was hooked to. Time and decay had done most of the work for me, and I was able to bend the metal plate enough to pull the screws out of the wall - something nobody else had apparently thought of, or hadn't been able to do at the time.

The Mascots-Only area was a startling and very welcomed change from the rest of the building I'd seen. For one, every second or third fluorescent light overhead was illuminated, even though they flickered and faded randomly. Also, nothing had been stolen or broken, even if age and exposure were definately taking their toll.

Tables had note pads and pens, there were clocks... even a punch-in clock on the wall complete with filled-out time cards. Chairs were scattered around and there was even a small break room with an old, static-filled television and long rotted-out food and drink on the counters.

It was like one of those post-apocalypse movies where everything is left in the state of evacuation.

As I walked the maze-like sub-basement hallways of the Mascots-Only area, the sights just became more and more interesting. As I went further, desks and tables were knocked over, papers scattered and almost melded with the damp floor, and a large carpet of mold was slowly overtaking the real rotting crimson floor-covering.

Everything was just sort of "squishy". Anything wood disintegrated into mush when I applied even the least amount of force, and clothing items hanging on hooks in one of the rooms simply fell to moist threads if I tried to unhook them.

One thing that annoyed me was that the light was becoming more sparse and unreliable as I went further into the dank, suffocating depths of the place.

Eventually, I reached a black and yellow striped door with the words "CHARACTER PREP 1" stenciled on it.

The door wouldn't open at first. I figured this was probably where the costumes were kept, and I definately wanted a photograph of that twisted, stinking mess. Try as I might, whatever angle or trick I tried, the door wouldn't budge.

That is, until I gave up and started to walk away. That was when there was a slight popping sound and the door creaked open slowly.

Inside, the room was completely dark. Pitch black. I used the camera flash to look for a light switch in the wall buy the door, but there was nothing.

As I made my search, I was jarred out of my sense of excitement by a loud electrical buzz. Rows of lights overhead suddenly flashed to life, flickering and fading in and out like the rest I had passed.

It took a second for my eyes to adjust, and it seemed like the light was going to just keep getting brighter until all the bulbs exploded... but just when I thought it would reach that critical stage, the lights dimmed a bit and steadied.

The room was exactly as I had pictured it. Various Disney costumes hung on the walls, fully put together like strange cartoon cadavers hung from invisible nooses.

There was an entire rack of loincloths and "native" clothes on hangers toward the back.

What I found odd, and what I wanted to photograph right away, was a Mickey Mouse costume at the center of the room. Unlike the other costumes, it was lying on its back in the center of the floor like a murder victim. The fur on the costume was rotten and shedding, creating bare patches.

What was even odder, however, was the coloring of the costume. It was like a photo negative of the actual Mickey Mouse. Black where he should be white and white where he should be black. His normally red overalls were light blue.

The sight was off-putting enough that I actually put off photographing the thing until last.

I took a picture of the costumes hanging on the walls. Upward angles, downward angles, side shots to show an entire row of frozen, putrid cartoon faces, some with plastic eyes missing.

Then I decided to stage a shot. Just one of the bedraggled character heads on the slick, grimy floor.

I reached for the headpiece of a Donald Duck costume and carefully removed it so the thing wouldn't fall apart in my hands.

As I looked into the face of the wide-eyed, moldering head, a loud clattering sound made me jump with fright.

I looked down at my feet, and there between my shoes was a human skull. It had fallen out of the mascot head and shattered into pieces at my feet; only the empty face and lower jaw remained, staring up at me.

I dropped the Duck head immediately, as you'd expect, and moved for the door. As I stood in the doorway, I looked back to the skull on the floor.

I had to take a picture of it, you know? I HAD to, for any number of reasons that may seem silly, but only if you don't think it through.

I'd need proof of what happened, especially if Disney was going to somehow make this go away. I had no doubt in my mind, right from the start, that even if it was just gross negligence, Disney was RESPONSIBLE for this.

That's when Mickey, that photo negative, opposite-Mickey in the middle of the floor, started to get up.

372reverse mickey

SadofreedomistAdded by Sadofreedomist

First sitting up, then climbing to its feet, the Mickey Mouse costume... or whoever was inside of it, stood there at the center of the room, its fake face just staring directly at me as I mumbled "No..." over and over and over...

With shaking hands, a violently thrashing heart, and legs that had once again turned to jelly, I managed to lift the camera and aim it at the opposite creature now quietly sizing me up.

The digital camera's screen displayed only dead pixels in the shape of the thing. It was a perfect silhouette of the Mickey costume. As the camera moved in my unsteady hands, the dead pixels spread, marring the screen wherever Mickey's outline moved to.

Then the camera died. Went blank and quiet and... broken.

I raised my eyes once again to the Mickey Mouse costume.

"Hey," it said in a hushed, perverted, but perfectly executed Mickey Mouse voice, "Wanna see my head come off?"

It started to pull at its own head, working its clumsy, glove-clad fingers around its neck with clawing, impatient movements similar to a wounded man trying to pull himself free of a predator's jaws...

As it worked its digits into its neck... so much blood...

So much thick, chunky, yellow blood...

I turned away as I heard a sickening tearing of cloth and flesh... only cared about getting away. Above the doorway out of this room, I saw the final message clawed into the metal with bone or fingernails...

"ABANDONED BY GOD"

I never got the pictures out of the camera. I never wrote the blog entry about it. After I ran from that place, fled for my sanity if not my very life, I knew why Disney didn't want anyone to know about this place.

They didn't want anyone like me getting in.

They didn't want anything like that getting out.